SWAHILI FORUM 24 (2017): 37-61

A FRIGHTENING PLAY: THE ELEMENT OF HORROR IN HUSSEIN'S *MASHETANI*

EMILIANO MINERBA

This paper attempts an analysis of Ebrahim Hussein's drama *Mashetani* through a critical approach based on the dimension of horror. Despite the pervasive strength of this element in *Mashetani*, it has rarely been considered as anything more than a mere stylistic element in a vision of this drama which approaches its contents only, using allegory. In this study, *Mashetani* will be read from a different point of view, which sees the horrific element as bearer of new contents and new subjects not always reachable through an allegorical interpretation, in order not only to make a contribution to literary criticism of this drama, but also to emphasize how horror can acquire an analytic function besides its stylistic role.

Introduction

The aim of this article is to propose some starting points for an analysis of Hussein's drama *Mashetani* through an approach which sheds light on the element of horror. The observation of aesthetic processes of horror traceable in this work will help to discover contents that are otherwise hardly detectable. The originality of this analysis consists both in its emphasis on the horror dimension and in the results deriving from an approach to horror not as a stylistic element, but as a bearer of content. The study is divided into three sections: in the first one, certain instruments for the analysis of horror and its psychological, literary, and aesthetic mechanisms are introduced, with particular attention to showing the theoretical distance between an approach that takes horror as a necessary element in the structure of the work of art, and others that don't take it into consideration, for instance the allegorical reading. The second section moves the focus to *Mashetani*: after a brief synopsis of the plot, a short review of the work of critics in respect of Hussein's drama is presented, in order to analyse to what extent horror has effectively been considered in previous studies. In the third section, the instruments of analysis previously described will be applied directly to the play, in order to show the events, features and characters in which the element of horror in *Mashetani* is detectable and to give an interpretation of the work based on a study of its mechanisms.

Looking at horror: instruments for a critical approach

Horror has been the object of a number of reflections and essays in literary criticism. In this section, three of them will be introduced, namely the psychoanalytical study of the '*Unheimliche*'

(approximately translatable as "the uncanny"), by Freud (1919), Cvetan Todorov's (1970) concept of the 'fantastic genre' and, finally, Noël Carroll's (1990) philosophical investigation of the aesthetics of horror. Despite the fact that these studies start from independent premises and arrive at different conclusions about the nature and the mechanisms of horror, their results are not in contradiction to each other and can give the reader a deeper comprehension of this feeling as it shows itself in literature.

Although Freud's aim in his essay *Das Unheimliche* (1919) was to give a psychoanalytical explanation of this feeling rather than a review of its functions in literature, he himself notes at the very beginning that the feeling of the *Unheimliche* represents a rare merging point between psychoanalysis and aesthetics (Freud 1991: 269); furthermore, later in the same essay he analyses a horror tale, *The Sandman* by E.T.A. Hoffmann, in order to throw light on the psychic process at the basis of this emotion (Freud 1991: 278-285).

Freud begins with the assumption that the *Unheimliche* is the feeling of discomfort caused by something that is not understandable, acceptable, or familiar to us, as the etymology of the term clearly shows: *unheimlich* is the opposite of *heimlich*, "familiar, well known, cosy (for example, a place)" (Freud 1991: 272-273). Continuing his reflections on the literal meaning of the term, Freud notes that *heimlich* possesses a second meaning, namely "private, secret, closed to the outside" (Freud 1991: 274): consequently, transferring this connotation to the term *unheimlich* gives it a second meaning: "*It is said to be* 'Unheimlich' *everything that ought to have remained… hidden and secret, but has arisen to one's perception*" (Schelling in Freud 1991: 275).[1]

Freud interprets Schelling's definition from the psychoanalytical point of view, stating that we experience the *Unheimliche* when our infantile beliefs, fears and certainties, later denied and removed as we enter adulthood, are "pulled out" of our subconscious by an event that makes us doubt what we know to be true (Freud 1991: 285-288). For example, in their first years, children normally believe that their life will have no end; later, they know and accept the reality of death. In their adulthood, however, any event that may be related to that former belief (for example seeing a supposed ghost) makes them doubt that life ends with death. This

[1] Because of the complexity of the image created by the etymology and the literal meaning of the term *Unheimliche*, as used by Freud to explain the concept, here we will always use the original German terms (*unheimlich* as adjective and the *Unheimliche* for the substantivized form), instead of English equivalents like *uncanny*.

doubt is no longer accepted with the serenity of childhood, but accompanied by the discomfort of the *Unheimliche* (Freud 1991: 286-287).

The concept of the *Unheimliche* as the destabilizing mechanism caused by something unexplainable and unacceptable that rises to the level of our consciousness has an important role in the analysis of *Mashetani*, as I will point out later. Freud, discussing the aesthetic role of the *Unheimliche* in literature, argues that the monsters and the fantastic antagonists of fairy tales don't generally give rise to this feeling in the reader because of the overtly unreal nature of the setting. By contrast, the *Unheimliche* is generated by a literary work which presents a setting that the reader can in a certain way recognize as his own, in which something unexplainable and destabilizing occurs (Freud 1991: 303-304). The allegorical interpretation of a literary work thus excludes an *unheimlich* reading of it.

The conflict between an allegorical reading and one which accepts the story as real is better analysed by Todorov.

The approach proposed by him in his work *Introduction à la littérature fantastique* (1970) has different premises: here the aim is to define a literary genre on the basis of its formal[2] mechanism, and not the emotional response of the reader, which, as Todorov notes, is too subjective to be used as a criterion of analysis (Todorov 2011: 38). In his essay, Todorov defines the *fantastic* as the genre which makes the reader hesitate between two interpretations of the narrated events: one of them sees the story as real, and the other one as imaginary. These two interpretations correspond to two genres, namely the *strange* (in which the narrated events, however unusual and extraordinary, finally reveal themselves to be real and plausible) and the *marvellous* (in which the events are undoubtedly a product of the imagination and cannot possibly happen in reality): the fantastic thus represents a borderline between the strange and the marvellous (Todorov 2011: 45-46).

Even if Todorov's definition relies on a formal feature of the text rather than on the emotional response of the reader, the hesitation which he deals with can easily be compared to the discomforting feeling of the *Unheimliche*, or, more generally, to anxiety. As Todorov writes, "*Fear is often related to the fantastic*" (Todorov 2011: 38).

---

[2] That is to say, abstract and describable independently of the content of the literary work.

In defining this genre, Todorov makes one more specification that reveals itself as fundamental in the analysis of a fantastic work: the necessity to avoid an allegorical interpretation of the text. In Todorov's opinion, once an allegorical approach is undertaken, the text is deprived of its representative function, and is seen as a set of symbols necessarily referring to a set of meanings outside it: questioning whether its internal setting is real or imaginary thus loses its importance (Todorov 2011: 35). This conclusion, although arising from a rather different assumption, can be compared to Freud's observation that the *Unheimliche* in literature can arise only when a real and plausible context is destabilized by an inexplicable and "uncanny" event (Freud 1991: 303-304): a reader is unlikely to be scared by an element, such as a monster, that he sees as an allegorical reference to an external concept. Furthermore, this justifies an analysis of *Mashetani* focusing on the element of horror that considers itself independent of the allegorical reading and the symbols that it identifies.

A third approach to horror literature (and art in general) has been proposed by the philosopher Noël Carroll. In his work *The Philosophy of Horror, or Paradoxes of the Hearth* (1990), he aims at examining aesthetically all the works of art that, from the second half of the 20th century, have been generally classified as 'horror'. His premise is thus pre-theoretical.

Carroll specifies that his work is focused on only one of the term's connotations: the kind of horror generated by art, which he defines *art-horror* (Carroll 1990: 13); at the basis of the feeling of art-horror is the element of monstrosity. Carroll defines the concept of the monster in terms of three features: firstly, it must be imaginary, and therefore incompatible with our knowledge of reality (works in which fear derives from real or plausible elements are placed by Carroll in a different category, *works of terror*); secondly, it must represent a danger for the protagonist or his fellows; lastly, it must necessarily be *impure* (Carroll 1990: 15-25). By impurity he means the intrinsic capacity of the monster to generate disgust in the reader: the monster must represent an error of nature, something that cannot be conceived as existing at all (Carroll 1990: 27).

Referring to Mary Douglas' work *Purity and Danger*, Carroll goes on to consider the feature of impurity as deriving from a violation of the reader's cultural categories: the monster is seen as impure because, representing an essence that goes across various categories, it threatens the reader's vision of the world, and, consequently, cannot be seen as "regular" (Carroll 1991: 31). A particular kind of impurity makes the reader able to distinguish between two or more merging categories; nevertheless, he realizes that in the monster those categories

are necessarily tied together, as in the case of the figure of the werewolf, which is not man and wolf at the same time, but which is between the two categories. This kind of merging is called *fission* (Carroll 1990: 45-46). The concepts of monstrosity and impurity as the result of crossing categories is a powerful instrument in the analysis of a work of horror, because it helps to examine the character of the monster by individuating the categories that compose it and the relations between them. Furthermore, Carroll's concept of impurity as a feeling of destabilization can easily be related to Todorov's hesitation in the face of a fantastic story, or to the discomfort caused by Freud's *Unheimliche*.

All these points of view can be used together, without creating contradictions, in the analysis of *Mashetani.* They are able to throw light on an element of the drama, the horrific one, that will reveal itself as bearing contents that are hardly approachable if it is ignored. The frightening elements in *Mashetani* are many and various, and involve different characterizations, settings and events; for all of them a parallel allegorical interpretation is of course possible, as many of the critics of this drama have shown in their literary studies. Thus, before analysing the horrific dimension of *Mashetani*, we will outline these elements in the drama and the allegorical values proposed for them.

Mashetani as an allegorical drama

According to Alain Ricard, *Mashetani*, published in 1971, represented the moment of greatest perplexity of Tanzanian critics regarding Hussein (Ricard 2000: 60). The protagonists of the drama are two boys, Juma and Kitaru. Juma is the descendant of an ancient family of *mabwanyenye*, Zanzibari landowners who led a plantation economy and who were dispossessed of all their property after the Afro-Shirazi Party's revolution (1964). Kitaru belongs to the new bourgeoisie of the *wanaizi*, families coming from pre-unification Tanganyika which, thanks to their Western education, are able to occupy various positions in the new administration, gaining wealth and social importance. Juma and Kitaru are connected by a solid friendship, although, as the drama goes on, it becomes the object of growing uncertainty.

Composed in four acts, the drama begins by showing two friends, Juma and Kitaru, in front of a baobab tree, playing what they call *mchezo wa Shetani na Binadamu*, "the Play[3] of the

[3] Here we have preferred to translate the word *mchezo* as "play", rather than "game", as for example Ricard does: the term "play" reproduces better the polysemy of the Swahili word, which can refer both to a game and

Demon and the Man", in which Juma plays the role of the Demon, and Kitaru that of the Man. During the Play, the Demon is presented as a powerful and eerie character, who shows his great power to the Man, in order to subjugate him: by doing so, he arouses in the Man a feeling of fear and reverence towards him. After having imposed upon the Man, the Demon manages to deceive him by presenting himself as a friend of his; but the Man detects the Demon's deception and fights against his hegemony, declaring that he wants to kill him. The Demon lets the Man do that: the two enemies celebrate his death, as requested by the Demon, with a waltz, and immediately after the Man stabs the Demon with a knife given to him by his enemy himself. However, even after killing the Demon, the Man still feels his influence in his mind, and runs away completely scared, leaving the baobab tree and his friend, Juma, alone.

In Act 2 a new setting is presented: Kitaru's mind, illuminated by a red light which gets progressively darker and darker, and in which a scaring laughter is continuously heard. Apparently unaware of this laughter, Juma and Kitaru are planning an evening at the cinema, but then they call it off; during their conversation, Kitaru begins to feel that something strange has happened to their friendship and is threatening to ruin it. Meanwhile, Kitaru's father arrives at their home, singing a song in English and wanting to show his brand new Mercedes Benz to his family and Juma. But after talking with his son about Demons, Kitaru's father feels worried about him and calls a doctor, who, once he has examined the boy, declares him to be ill, admitting that he knows no therapy for him.

In Act 3 we return to the original setting, outside Kitaru's mind: Juma, after listening to his grandmother's nostalgic memories of the time of the Zanzibari landowners' hegemony, is sitting in a bar, wondering if his friendship with Kitaru will endure, despite the increasing social and ideological gap between them. In the meantime, two men at the next table are talking about the glorious future that they expect for themselves as members of the new ruling class of independent Tanzania.

In Act 4 the two friends meet again at Kitaru's home. Juma discovers that his friend, after running away from the Play, has come back home and fallen asleep, having a terrible dream. After that, Juma and Kitaru decide to go back to the baobab and enact the Play once more, in order to understand what is causing the ruin of their friendship. But when they arrive there,

---

to a theatrical piece. In this article, the piece played by Juma and Kitaru in the first act of *Mashetani* will be always referred to as to the Play, with a capital letter.

Kitaru insists on acting the Demon's role: this results in the two friends arguing and, soon, fighting. Once they stop fighting, Juma tells Kitaru that their friendship can no longer exist, and, despite his friend's insistences to the contrary, he leaves him alone near the baobab.

The complexity of the plot, together with the references to the political history of the country, has made *Mashetani* the object of many literary studies. In the next section, some of the conclusions of these studies will be presented: one feature that will be revealed is the allegorical approach, common to all of them.

Allegorical readings of the drama

In *Ebrahim Hussein: Swahili Theatre and Individualism*, Ricard observes, with reference to *Mashetani*, that this drama has often been read by critics as a parable of the class conflicts that shaped the young socialist and independent Tanzania (Ricard 2000: 58).

The critical studies examined by Ricard generally try to identify specific elements in the drama (characters, events, objects, etc.), and to read each of them as an allegorical reference to external elements, usually belonging to the socio-political context which saw the drama being published. For example, quoting Mvungi (Ricard 2000: 58):

> *Mwandishi anatumia fumbo la shetani na binadamu kuonyesha matatizo yanayokabili watu waliotawaliwa kwa muda mrefu.*
>
> The writer uses the "riddle, parable" of the demon and the man to show problems coming to the surface in people who were dominated for a long time (Ricard 2000: 60).

Later in Ricard's text, another quotation from Mvungi explains the laughter coming from off the stage at several moments of the drama as a symbol of the colonialists:

> *Vivyo hivyo, wakoloni walipotoa uhuru walitucheka kama vile wanajua tutashindwa kujiendesha. Kwa hiyo, muda wote tunapogongana wenyewe kwa sababu ya mfumo tuliorithi, wao wanatucheka kwa mbali.*
>
> The colonialists granted independence, but they laughed because they knew that we could not succeed in governing ourselves. So, every time we bungle up because of the structures we have inherited, they laugh at us from afar.

Topan, quoted in Ricard's work, also reads the Play of the Demon and the Man as a composition of allegorical symbols, in which not only the characters, but even the setting and the objects are references to elements external to the drama (Ricard 2000: 60):

> *Uhusiano baina ya binadamu na shetani unakuwa uhusiano baina ya wazalendo na Mkoloni kwenye mazingira ya mbuyu: siasa. Mbuyu ni siasa; Shetani huwaingia watu mbuyuni, mkoloni huwaingia watu kisiasa. Wazalendo wanataka waungane, wawe kitu kimoja, wawe huru. Wanataka wapate uhuru kamili, uhuru kisiasa, uhuru kiuchumi, uhuru kiutamaduni. Mkoloni, shetani, hapendezwi na jambo hilo.*
>
> The relationship between man and the demon is the relationship between patriots and colonialists in the baobab context: that is to say, in politics. The demon possesses the men at the baobab. Colonialism takes possession of men through politics. The patriots want unity, political, economic, and cultural freedom. The colonialist, the demon, does not want to hear talk of that.

Therefore, in Topan's opinion, the Demon, the Man and the Baobab are respectively symbols of the colonialists, the patriots and politics. Furthermore, Topan sees a fourth symbol, the knife, as a reference to the political power passed on from the colonialists to the new state (Ricard 2000: 60). An allegorical approach has also been proposed by other scholars, such as R. M. Wafula.

In his book *Ushairi wa Tamthilia. Historia na Maendeleo Yake*, Wafula's aim is to analyse in which way the figure of the Demon is used to show different dimensions of the decadence that characterizes African societies, together with possible ways to overcome this situation (Wafula 2003: 168). His reading, like Topan's, is related to colonialism; but, differently from him, *Ukoloni mkongwe* here is just a landscape in which other questions are asked, especially those regarding men's relations and lives after the end of colonialism (Wafula 2003: 169). For example, Wafula claims that "*the story of the Demon and the Man is an allegory of the way a man prepares to face both economic and inner, personal problems*" (Wafula 2003: 172, my translation[4]). An interesting point in Wafula's reading is his analysis of the transformation happening during the Play: Juma and Kitaru, from being two simple actors, turn completely into the characters they first were representing. In Wafula's vision, the deterioration of Juma's

---

[4] *Hadithi ya Shetani na Binadamu ni istiara inayoigiza jinsi mtu anavyojizatiti kukabiliana na matatizo ya kiuchumi na kihisia.*

and Kitaru's friendship is itself an allegory of the political contrasts between their two social classes, as well as a symbol of the struggle between man's active will to control his world: with this presumption, the scholar manages to explain the "transformation" of Juma and Kitaru as a way to make this symbolization evident (Wafula 2003: 172). At the base of this transformation, there is an allegory-oriented observation.

Among other symbolizations detected by Wafula, there is the Demon's scary laughter (*kicheko kinachotisha*), which, in its inner contradiction of being a positive but actually frightening event, represents the double face of the Demon (namely, politics and economy): it can both support and oppose men's wills (Wafula 2003: 173).

A last interesting allegorical symbol discussed by Wafula refers to a particular moment of the Play between the Demon and the Man: in order to establish his control over the Man, the Demon asks him to say a word in '*demonic language*'. The Man starts pronouncing a word of unclear meaning, '*Gashalazeritwas*', repeating it several times until he begins feeling pain and bleeds (Hussein 1971: 3-4). Wafula reads this moment as the state of cultural alienation that colonialism has imposed on Africa: this alienation has grown up in African minds through learning the colonial language – here directly represented by the '*demonic language*' – which has confused and enslaved thoughts. The scholar quotes Mugambi's opinion that *Gashalazeritwas* derives from an English expression, '*Gush it all as it was*': the dominated mind must let his whole culture and tradition gush out of him and become a *tabula rasa* for the colonialist (Wafula 2003: 180-181).

In his work Wafula gives explanations for many other elements of the drama; here, it is important to underline that his reflections are always based on an allegorical approach. Even the elements most evidently related to fear or mystery, such as the scary laughter and the "real" transformation of Juma and Kitaru into the Demon and the Man, are subjected to this kind of interpretation: in this way, as Todorov (2011: 35) says, the feature of being horrific is necessarily lost in the allegorical meaning.

The allegorical readings of *Mashetani* are undoubtedly able to disclose the drama's contents and questions at a great level of depth. Themes like the colonialism legacy or the emergence of a new ruling class are present in Hussein's work: a sufficient example is in Act 3, Scene 2, where two men sitting near Juma's table in a bar are talking about their social climbing in independent Tanzania, in a continuous code-switching between Swahili and English (Hussein 1971: 40-44). The reading presented in the next section does not deny the

contributions made by these studies. On the contrary, it sees in them a fundamental point of departure, rather than a finishing line, and tries to combine them with the study of aesthetic processes of horror present in the drama in order to reach a more exhaustive interpretation. This analysis will be centred on the character who, more than all the others, transports this horrific element: the Demon.

Mashetani as a horror drama

Act 1 opens with the beginning of the Play: Juma, standing with Kitaru in front of a baobab tree, announces to an audience that they are about to take on the roles of the Demon and the Man (Hussein 1971: 1). It would be interesting to ask whether the audience Juma is talking to coincides with the real general public in front of the actors, or is a fictitious audience which the characters imagine. However, the audience does not take any active role nor is it represented by an actor. What is undoubtedly there, instead, is the *mbuyu*, the baobab tree that will be the setting of the Play. Both Wafula (2003: 172) and Ricard (2000: 55) mention that the baobab tree is inhabited by spirits and demons; some proverbs reflect this traditional belief, such as *Kila shetani na mbuyu wake*[5]. As mentioned above, scholars have seen in the baobab an allegorical symbol for politics; nevertheless, it is interesting to note that, through the baobab, the Demon is represented as a traditional kind of spirit, the *Shetani*, which is well known along the Swahili coast and whose origins are traced back to the *Šayṭān* of the Arab-Islamic world.

The *Šayṭān*: behind Hussein's Shetani

After announcing the beginning of the Play, Juma enters the baobab's cavity. He comes out after a long time, sweating and with a changed face (Hussein 1971: 1). With his first lines he introduces himself as the *Shetani* (Hussein 1971: 1-2[6]):

Unanijua mimi nani?	Do you know who I am?
Mimi Shetani.	I am the *Shetani*.
Siyo jini wala kuhani.	Neither a *jini* nor a *kuhani*.
Mimi Shetani.	I am the *Shetani*.

[5] http://swahiliproverbs.afrst.illinois.edu/kindness.html
[6] From here on, all translations of the quoted texts are mine, except where otherwise indicated.

Uwezo wangu hauhifadhiki.	My power is uncontrollable.
Wema wangu hauhisabiki.	My kindness is incalculable.
Ubaya wangu hausemeki.	My wickedness is ineffable.
Ninajenga.	I build.
Ninabomoa.	I destroy.
Ninatukuza.	I glorify.
Ninadhalilisha nitakavyo.	I mortify as I want.
Mimi ni nguvu na nguvu ni mimi.	I am the force and the force is me.
Mimi ni uwezo na uwezo ni mimi.	I am the power and the power is me.
Tazama muujiza. (Anajibadilisha.) *Sasa mimi nani?]*	Look at the wonder. (*He transforms.*) Now who am I?]

The *Shetani* introduces himself in intensely lyrical language, which is in contrast with the general linguistic register of the rest of the drama, but will reappear at other essential moments. In the first lines, the character introduces himself as a *Shetani*, making a difference between himself and other kinds of spirits, like *jini* and *kuhani*. All these spirits derive from Arabic culture: the *jinn* is not necessarily an evil spirit (it can also convert to Islam); *kuhhān*, plural form of the term *kāhin*, 'soothsayer', is a reference to divination and fortune telling. *Šayṭān*, on the contrary, is, according to Islam, man's manifest enemy. The Qur'an is full of references to *Šayṭān* and his relationship with human beings. The last surah, the *Surah of Men*, is particularly focused on *Šayṭān*:

> Say, "I seek refuge in the Lord of mankind
> The Sovereign of mankind.
> The God of mankind,
> From the evil of the retreating whisperer
> Who whispers [evil] into the breasts of mankind
> From among the jinn and mankind."[7]

Here *Šayṭān* is called the "*retreating whisperer*", in Arabic *al-waswās al-ḫannas*. The term *waswās* (from which comes the Swahili word *wasiwasi*) expresses the idea of whispering, but also that of temptation, suggesting something evil, a wicked action. Piccardo, in his Italian

[7] Translation from https://quran.com/114

translation, translates the verb *waswasa* as "*soffiare il male*"[8] ("to blow the evil"). *Shetani*, thus, is a manifest enemy of man, but his actions, according to the Qur'an, are hidden: he aims at destroying human beings and their faiths, beliefs, and expectations through his speech. This powerful, but secret and hidden, action gives to the Islamic *Šayṭān* as well to Hussein's *Shetani* a strongly *unheimlich* characterization: the Demon's nature is a mystery which frightens human beings just with the idea of unveiling and unravelling it (as quoted above, *Shetani* says "*My wickedness is ineffable*", see Hussein 1971: 1). Reference to the Qur'an is made not only in *Shetani*'s characterization, but also in his linguistic register. *Shetani*'s first line is typeset and presented as a poem, full of repetitions (like that of the verse "*Mimi Shetani"*, twice), homeoteleuta (like the ending *-ani* of the first four verses), syntactical parallelisms ("*Uwezo wangu hauhifadhiki. / Wema wangu hauhisabiki. / Ubaya wangu hausemeki.*") and symmetries ("*Mimi ni nguvu na nguvu ni mimi. / Mimi ni uwezo na uwezo ni mimi.*"). This style, so rich in figures of speech based on sound, has an antecedent in the *sağ`*, the rhythmic style in which the whole of the Qur'an is composed, characterized by highly repetitive, alliterative and rhymed prose, which is at the base of the Islamic belief of the *i`ğāz*, the inimitable aesthetic perfection of God's revelation (Amaldi 2008: 34, 38).

From the voice to the body: Man's transformation

Shetani is thus related to a tradition which characterizes him as an *unheimlich* figure *per se*. The succession of events that start with his first appearance confirms this feature. Shortly after his initial speech, the Demon asks the Man if he really feels dread and reverence for him. The Man answers that he feels that way, but the conversation continues in an unexpected way (Hussein 1971: 2):

SHETANI: *Mbona siuoni unyenyekevu wala uoga katika uso wako?*

BINADAMU: *Kipitacho moyoni si lazima kionekane usoni.*

SHETANI: *Sijali kipitacho moyoni. Ninajali kionekanacho usoni. Onesha kwa dhahiri ninachotaka kuiona. (*Anacheka*.) Baadaye utafahamu kuwa uso ukizoea kuonesha kinachotakiwa kuonekana, na sicho kinachopita moyoni, basi Wakati utauzoeza moyo usifarikiane na uso wake. Unaelewa nasema nini?*

BINADAMU: *Naelewa.*

---

[8] http://www.corano.it/corano_testo/114.htm

SHETANI: *Weka akilini hilo. Utakuja kulitaka baadaye.*

DEMON: Why don't I see reverence or dread on your face?

MAN: What passes through the heart does not have to appear on the face.

DEMON: I don't care what passes through the heart. I do care what appears on the face. Show clearly what I want to see. (*He laughs*) Later you will realize that if the face gets used to showing what is requested to appear, and not what passes through the heart, then Time will make the heart used to not being separated from its face. Do you understand what I am saying?

MAN: I understand.

DEMON: Bear it in mind. You are going to want it.

After this conversation, the Demon asks the Man to come to him several times. The Man repeats this action faster and faster, and finally throws himself in prostration in front of the Demon, who declares himself satisfied (Hussein 1971: 2-3). Juma and Kitaru's transformation is at this point complete. Differently from Wafula's reading (Wafula 2003: 172), in this analysis the transformation is not a reference to something external to the text, but a real process developing within the story, that has to be considered as a true and not just symbolic manifestation of mysterious forces. In such an atmosphere of mystery and anxiety, Juma and Kitaru suddenly lose their human natures and turn into two opposite immutable, eternal forces, namely the Demon and the Man. The feature of immutability is expressed through the static characterization of both *Shetani* and *Binadamu*. These new characters on the stage, Juma-Demon and Kitaru-Man, represent a violation of different categories: they are two common boys and in the meantime two non-human, eternal forces; furthermore, *Shetani* and *Binadamu* are at the same time two imaginary characters invented by the two boys and two real figures that manifest themselves in the bodies of the actors (as previously mentioned, Juma comes out of the baobab with a changed face, and Kitaru is asked to change his face, his outward appearance, and to dominate his heart), as well as in their speeches. As violations of these categories, the Demon and the Man correspond to the definition of *impurity* proposed by Carroll (1991: 31). But this violation of categories, which also applies to the real and the imaginary (are Juma and Kitaru just acting or they have turned into their characters?), can also be read in terms of Todorov's concept of *fantastic*, since the hesitation between the two interpretations of the events won't be resolved at the end of the Act. Finally, being transformed against one's own will is, in the Freudian analysis, an intensely *unheimlich* event.

Psychologically it can represent the fear of castration (Freud 1991: 282-283); but here the process of the *Unheimliche* is completely reproduced in Juma's and Kitaru's metamorphosis. This process has a specific path: from their inner realities to their outer ones, their bodies, which, for this reason, are subjected to changes. Similarly, the *Unheimliche,* as analysed by Freud, is the discomfort caused by a secret, hidden and unacceptable element in our subconscious that frightens and disgusts us when it rises to our consciousness. As Carroll's concept of impurity suggests, the two characters emerging from Juma's and Kitaru's inner worlds are external to them, as well as part of them, even if this is not accepted by their consciousness.

The first part of the Play, the metamorphosis of the actors into the characters they are playing, is completed. Immediately a second process of transformation begins: the Demon tries to enter the Man's mind. As already mentioned, this part of the Play has been considered as an allegory of the pervasive influence of the colonialists on the culture of the Africans: the traditions and ways of life of the colonizers enter the colonized mind. The movement of entering is undoubtedly present in this moment of the drama, but the effect of this movement is once again an *unheimlich* transformation, The Man's inner reality comes out and expresses itself in his outer reality. After having made the Man prostrate in front of him, the Demon immediately changes his manner and behaves as his best friend. He begs the Man, in the name of their friendship, to receive from him a secret that corresponds to his own nature: "*lakini siri hii ni mimi*" ("but this secret is me", see Hussein 1971: 3). The secret is a word in demonic language. But before revealing it to the Man, the Demon explains the reason for choosing him as depositary of his secret (Hussein 1971: 3):

SHETANI: *[...]* Wewe *rafiki yangu. Vilevile kila mtu ana shetani wake. Mashetani nao ni hivyo nivyo. Na huu ni ukosefu wa kila kiumbe. Ukosefu wangu ni kukupa siri hii. Lakini kitakacho moyo ni dawa.*

DEMON: [...] You are my friend. In the same way everyone has his own demon. And demons are just like that. And this is a deficiency of every creature. My deficiency is in giving you this secret. But what the heart wants is a medicine.

The Demon's speech shows in a vivid manner the close relationship between himself and the Man: they are two different creatures, but at the same time two faces of the same nature, and so they build together a monstrous entity, following the mechanism described by Carroll as *fission*. The sentence "*Kila mtu ana shetani wake*" ("Everyone has his own demon") is a

reference to the above-quoted proverb, "*Kila mbuyu na shetani wake*" ("Every baobab tree has its own demon"): this juxtaposition creates the image of a Demon dwelling inside the Man, as inside a baobab. The Demon's secret, which the *Shetani* himself reveals as his own essence, expresses the Man's own secret, and, as before with Juma and Kitaru, its disclosure will produce visible changes to his body (Hussein 1971: 4):

SHETANI: *[...] Liseme neno nililokufunza.*

BINADAMU: *Gashalazeritwas.*

SHETANI: *Sema nikusikie.*

BINADAMU: *Gashalazeritwas.*

SHETANI: *Sema kwa dhati yako.*

BINADAMU: *(*anasema kwa dhati*) Gashalazeritwas.*

SHETANI: *Sema acha likuumize.*

BINADAMU: *(*linamuumiza*) Gashalazeritwas.*

SHETANI: *Likutoe damu.*

BINADAMU: *(*linamtoa damu*) Gashalazeritwas.*

SHETANI: *Sasa likuvunjevunje maini.*

BINADAMU: *(*linamvunjavunja maini*) Gashalazeritwas.*

SHETANI: *Liache likuingie ndani ya nafsi yako.*

BINADAMU: *Gashalazeri… t… was*

SHETANI: *Ndani ya hali yako.*

BINADAMU: *Gash… Gasha… aah. (*Anatapatapa kwa maumivu. Kimya. Kazirai. Shetani huku anakenya. Anamnyoshea mikono Binadamu kwa huruma.*)*

SHETANI: *Rafiki mpenzi, rafiki mwandani. Rafiki wa milele, rafiki wa daima. Ninakupokea. Ninaifurahikia leo, siku ya uzao wako. Kutoka katika tumbo la giza jeusi, kuingia katika ulimwengu wa nuru nyeupe.*

DEMON: Say the word I taught you.

MAN: Gashalazeritwas.

DEMON: Speak so I can hear you.

MAN: Gashalazeritwas.

DEMON: Speak with all your heart.

MAN: (*He speaks with his heart*) Gashalazeritwas.

DEMON: Speak, let it hurt you.

MAN: (*It hurts him*) Gashalazeritwas.

DEMON: Let it make you bleed.

MAN: (*It makes him bleed*) Gashalazeritwas.

DEMON: Now let it shatter your liver.

MAN: (*It shatters his liver*) Gashalazeritwas.

DEMON: Let it enter you, your soul.

MAN: Gashalazeri… t… was.

DEMON: Your nature.

MAN: Gash… Gasha… aah. (*He's shaken by pain. Silence. He has fainted. Meanwhile the Demon is sniggering. He gives the Man his hand with pity.*)

DEMON: Dear friend, true friend. Forever friend, always friend. I receive you. I rejoice for today, the day of your birth. Coming out of the womb of black darkness, coming into the world of white light.

Even if the Demon asks the Man to let that word enter his soul and his nature, all the movements present in this moment of the Play are actually directed towards the outside: first of all, the voice, that comes physically out of the speaker's mouth, and that gets louder at each repetition. Even if, in agreement with Mugambi, quoted by Wafula (2003: 180-181), we accept that *Gashalazeritwas* derives from the English expression '*Gush it all as it was*', the *unheimlich* atmosphere in which the whole Play is set suggests that what must gush is not the culture of the colonized mind, in an allegorical vision, but the inner, hidden side of the Man's nature, that corresponds to the Demon's secret. This unveiling of a reality that is supposed to be hidden corresponds, as seen above, to the process of the *Unheimliche*, and explains the

Demon's ability to arouse feelings of discomfort, with respect to both the reader and the Man's character.

We can consider the Demon and the Man as two complementary faces of the same being, and so, according to Carroll's vision, define them as monsters since they represent a violation of the categories "same/other". The word *Gashalazeritwas* pronounced by the Man reflects this contradiction. If spelled from right to left, it reads *Sawtirezalashag* (taking the group *sh* as immutable, since it represents a single sound). Considering the Islamic background of the Demon's figure, it would be interesting to consider this new term as deriving from an Arabic expression: from the division '*sawti-reza-lashag*' one can arrive at the Arabic sentence '*ṣawtī riḍà al-ašağğ*', in English "*my voice is the satisfaction of the one whose skull is broken* ". This formula can be related to the Demon's character in several ways: The voice is the way the Demon introduces himself and enters the Man's mind. The mind itself loses its integrity and identity because of this invasion, as the image of the broken skull shows. Finally, the satisfaction of the Demon at having completed this invasion nevertheless in this sentence belongs to the Man with the broken skull: this shows that he himself, in spite of the pain it causes, accepts the invasion of the voice, probably because he recognizes it as intrinsic to him, as the Man and the Demon are.

The Demon's invasion of the Man is actually an *escape*: the hidden and secret side of the Man's being rises up to the level of consciousness and changes his body. The physical effects of pronouncing the word *Gashalazeritwas* are devastating: the word starts hurting him, then makes him bleed, shatters his liver, and makes him faint. When he recovers, the metamorphosis is complete, and it is, as the Demon says, a rebirth. His line "*Coming out of the womb of black darkness, coming into the word of white light*" emphasizes once more the in-to-out movement of this transformation. This metamorphosis is a fundamental point of the development of the Play: on the one hand, the Man perceives and is frightened by this transformation that he didn't expect, and sees it as a menace to his identity and free will; on the other hand, even if he manages to kill the Demon he will continue to feel his presence in himself, as a reality that is at this point inescapable.

The metamorphosis described so far doesn't necessarily have an allegorical reference. The Play of the Demon and the Man, like *Mashetani* in its entirety, can be read as a complete and autonomous system whose meanings do not have to be searched out. Avoiding an allegorical explanation of the Play means recognizing it as a reality within the drama's system: whether the Demon and the Man are seen as imaginary figures invading the realistic setting of Juma

and Kitaru (following the interpretation defined by Todorov as *marvellous*), or as an unexpected manifestation of their real inner worlds (in Todorov's *strange* interpretation), the transformations happen during the Play, and are undoubtedly *unheimlich* in their nature. These events, furthermore, are relevant to the development of the drama that makes it necessary to see them as actual and not – or not only – allegorical, as if the deterioration of Juma's and Kitaru's friendship were independent of their performance of the Play. This clarification is fundamental for continuing this analysis and trying to see how these *unheimlich* transformations become, thorugh their aesthetic functions, bearer of content.

Hussein's conception of history

In Act 2 and Act 3, after the end of the Play, the audience knows Kitaru and Juma individually, together with their families and the social contexts and histories which they belong to. If the Play of Act 1, including Juma's and Kitaru's metamorphosis in the Demon and the Man, were merely an experiment in self-knowing through theatrical performance, whose meaning is purely allegorical, it would have no effect on the development of the plot in the following Acts; but traces of the Demon's and the Man's invasions into Juma's and Kitaru's minds are present and visible in the development of the plot. Following Hussein's stage directions, the whole of Act 2 should be played in darkness; the only light on the stage is a range of red shapes, unpleasant to see and getting darker as the Act proceeds. On the stage a fog is spread, and at the back of it a photo of Kitaru's head indicates that the setting is Kitaru's mind; at certain moments, a scary laughter is heard from off the stage, getting louder until the actors have to raise their voices in order to be heard; then the laughter suddenly stops, creating a silence that is scarier still (Hussein 1971: 13). In the whole of this Act, the actors behave as if they don't notice any of these eerie elements of the setting: the Demon is still in Kitaru's mind, even if he doesn't realize it. The effects of the Demon cause a difficulty in communication that Kitaru develops during this Act. While talking with his friend about university, Kitaru discovers that his vision of the university as a centre of culture, education, and general development clashes with Juma's idea that it is simply a way to achieve a better standard of living. Kitaru cuts their discussion short, describing Juma's words as "demonic". Then they start laughing loudly, simultaneously with the laughter coming from outside (Hussein 1971: 17). Kitaru becomes increasingly isolated, not least from his parents, who, completely satisfied by a life which makes them the new protagonists in society and politics, don't understand the reasons for their son's discomfort.

On the other hand, Juma is experiencing a similar situation. In Act 3, while thinking about the unexpected development of the Play and wondering why Kitaru ran away at the end, he receives a suggestion from his grandmother who tells him not to worry about his friend, whose parents are just *parvenus* who don't deserve the respect due to their ancient and prestigious family (Hussein 1971: 37-39). Shortly after this, he is sitting in a bar, listening to two men who are probably, like Kitaru's parents, part of the new ruling class of independent Tanzania: in their vision, the new state will enable them to gain wealth and social power (Hussein 1971: 40-44). Like Kitaru earlier, Juma feels the need to talk about what he hears with his friend; but he also finds it difficult to communicate with him. He says this in his thoughts, which take the form of a lyrical composition, like the Demon's first lines (Hussein 1971: 44):

*Bibi. (*Anatabasamu.*)*	Grandma. (*He smiles.*)
Labda nimueleze Kitaru.	Maybe I should explain it to Kitaru.
Aelewe wapi?	How could he understand?
Hata akiweza kuelewa	Even if he could
Sitamwambia.	I wouldn't tell him.
Katu sitamwambia.	I'll never tell him.
Kidonda cha mti kinasikikana harufu tu	A tree's wound is perceived only through its smell,
Hakionyeshwi. Aibu, aibu kubwa.	It does not show itself. What a great shame.

The common problem of Juma and Kitaru lies in their communication. Scholars like Wafula (2003: 170) claim that in *Mashetani* Hussein has wondered if true friendship can resist the power of social differences between human beings, in this case between Juma and Kitaru. But it is important to note that at this point the differences between the two protagonists are not related to their social contexts: they both severely disapprove the ideology of their families. Kitaru's faith in education and general progress in the new state clashes with his parents' race for wealth and power; on the other hand, Juma does not agree with his grandmother's views on the superiority of their family, and he eventually describes her words as *sumu,* "poison" (Hussein 1971: 42). The difference between them is related to their different conceptions of history. In Kitaru's opinion, human beings can actively build and direct their own history: the new, independent state is a great opportunity to build a society based on equality and justice,

guided by education and knowledge. On the other hand, Juma argues that, even if they achieve control and power, human beings are not independent of their history: a better society cannot be constructed if it is not time to do so, and even the most educated political propaganda cannot defeat the will of history, which consists in building, in independent Tanzania, new ruling classes and new inequalities. Juma realizes that his friend, living a historical phase that sees him and his family as the supposed protagonists, would reject this opinion, even if Kitaru is secretly tormented by doubts concerning the ability of his optimistic ideology to shape his time: his doubts are expressed by Juma through the metaphor of the tree's wound, not visible but perceptible; it refers to the baobab's cavity from which the Demon came out during the Play.

Juma's vision considers history as a living being, with consciousness and free will, that is stronger than human actions and hopes; this conception of history is present in several of Hussein's works. In *Kinjeketile*, for example, history plays an active role, in the shape of the word. The message pronounced by the protagonist, the hero and prophet Kinjeketile, triggers a revolt that develops independently of the speaker. Kinjeketile himself describes his word as a sort of living being (Hussein 1969: 33):

> *Binadamu huzaa neno – neno hushika nguvu – likawa kubwa – kubwa likamshinda binadamu kwa ukubwa na nguvu. Likamuangusha. Neno ambalo limezaliwa na ntu likaja kuntawala ntu yule yule aliyelizaa.*
>
> A man bears the word – the word gets stronger – and becomes big – big, and defeats the human being in size and force. And precipitates him. The word born by the man becomes able to dominate that same man who bore it.

In *Mashetani*, history also has a role in the drama as a living, active being: not in the shape of the word, but in that of the Demon. This analysis of the horror element within the drama, and the way it influences the development of events, leads to the conclusion that *Shetani* is not a symbol of a specific force or event, like colonialism, as Topan thinks (Ricard 2000: 60), but that he is history, which Hussein considers, here as in *Kinjeketile*, as a living, even if occult and hidden, force, rejected but inescapable by human beings. Since history in Hussein's drama is an active force and not a concept, it cannot be symbolized and conceptualized through mere allegorical symbols: on the contrary, it has to be *identified* with a character, and thus to *be* this character, in order to take part in the drama as an autonomous individual, as true and self-sufficient as the others. *Shetani*, or more precisely the couple *Shetani-Binadamu*

as a unique being in two opposing figures, is the monster who attacks Juma's and Kitaru's friendship, as well as their identity.

Problems in Juma's and Kitaru's friendship had begun before they acted in the Play, and were related at a certain level to their social backgrounds, as Juma himself says to Kitaru in Act 4: "*sumu haitoki katika mchezo, bali katika kitendo – kitendo cha kila siku*" ("Poison doesn't come from a play, but from an action; an everyday action", Hussein 1971: 57). However, Juma's words are not in contradiction with the *unheimlich* characterization of *Shetani* and *Binadamu*: in fact the *Unheimliche* and impurity (in Carroll's view) derive from the fact that the Demon and the Man are both external and internal to Juma's and Kitaru's beings. The *Unheimliche* in their transformation derives from the fact that the Demon and the Man are really parts of them, but these hidden sides of their beings manage to grow and unexpectedly become independent and dominant over the two boys. This is the reason why it is impossible to conceive the Demon and the Man merely as allegories: they are parts of Juma and Kitaru and of their real beings. History, the true identity of the Demon following my interpretation, is originally part of human beings; but it grows and becomes independent from them, as an opposite force that is, in Hussein's conception, real.

In other words, it is impossible to conciliate a purely allegorical reading of *Shetani* and *Binadamu* (as proposed by Topan and Wafula) and a reading that interprets these characters as alive and active, real and actual in the drama, as Juma and Kitaru are. Their analytical role is not necessarily in an external concept to which they refer, but in their intrinsic and independent characters, which enable us to grasp the author's thinking.

This distance from allegory is a feature of *Mashetani* that puts it very close to other important theatrical works of the 20th century, like those of the Italian playwright Pirandello[9], who explicitly rejected the employment of allegorical symbolizations. Pirandello's (2013: 4) ideas expressed in the preface to *Six Characters in Search of an Author* explain why the reading of *Shetani* and *Binadamu* presented here cannot be associated with allegory. He sees a dialectical opposition between allegorical art (or, in this case, the allegorical reading of a work of art) and non-allegorical art. In both cases, there is a relation between the work of art and an external, universal thought or value; but the former is the attempt to give an *a priori*

[9] Hussein may have read Pirandello's drama *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921), which he quotes in one of his articles, published in 1983 (Hussein,1983: 200).

formulated concept an artistic form, while the latter is a work of art that originates and makes sense in itself, and that for this reason bears its own senses and values. In an allegorical text, like a parable, the text makes sense only if the reader associates its elements with some external meaning, as explained by Todorov (2011: 35); in this case, it is the experiencing of *Mashetani's* horrific element that communicates the drama's contents and values. The reader does not associate them with external elements, but rather, as argued by Pirandello, translates them in terms of his own experience and reflection on life, recognizing that, before he gives an interpretation to it, the text is already "living and free in its whole expression".

We have seen that there is a relationship between *Shetani* and the Islamic figure of *Šayṭān*. The latter is defined in the Qur'ān as *al-waswās al-ḫannas*, "the retreating whisperer", namely the tempter, who uses his hidden voice to control men and destroy them. This feature is present in Hussein's *Shetani*. In Act 2, Juma's opinion concerning the role of the university in society, as well as his parents' behaviour, are unacceptable for Kitaru with his idealistic vision of independence as an opportunity for development: as we have seen, he rejects his friend's opinion as "demonic words" (Hussein 1971: 17). Even the eerie setting of Act 2, with the laughter that gets louder and louder without being heard by the characters on the stage, is a sign of the persistent but hidden action of the monster in Kitaru's mind: the channel of this influence is again the voice. The doctor called by Kitaru's parents to examine him comments on his situation as follows (Hussein 1971: 34):

> *Anahiari ugonjwa kuliko wasiwasi. […] Anaogopa kuwa katika hali ya wasiwasi. Sijui; labda kwake yeye, ninavyofikiri mimi, wasiwasi una hatari zaidi kuliko ugonjwa.*
>
> He accepts illness rather than doubt. […] He is afraid of being in a state of doubt. I don't know; maybe for him, as I think, doubt is more dangerous than illness.

The term *wasiwasi*, from the Arabic word *waswās*, "whisper", used here to describe Kitaru's state, not only indicates his doubts about his relationships with Juma and his parents, but above all the action of the Demon's whisper. His doubts are perceived by him as created by an external force, and are experienced as an attack on his freedom and identity. This is the way Kitaru describes, in Act 4, what the audience had seen happening to his mind in Act 2. He tells Juma that, after having escaped from the baobab, he had come back home and fallen asleep; while sleeping, he had a nightmare that he describes to his friend (Hussein 1971: 48-49):

Ndiyo hivyo. Sasa sijui saa ngapi nimelala. Lakini mara ninaona nina manyoya. Mimi nimeota manyoya, mzee ameota manyoya, kila mtu na kila kitu kimeota manyoya. Manyoya mengi, mengi sana. Mara manyoya yakageuka mbawa; tukawa tunarushwa angani. Kwanza ilikuwa raha, raha kabisa. Lakini mara tukaingiwa na hofu. Hatuwezi kufanya lolote. Mbawa zinaturusha zinapotaka. Vitu vinaruka angani — majumba, magari na sisi — vinatuchukua. Mimi, nakumbuka, nikaanza kuwa na hofu. Nikaanza kunyonyoa manyoya yangu. Lakini kila nikijinyonyoa, mengine yanaota. Yananiziba pumzi. Mengine yanaota, makubwa zaidi na yenye nguvu zaidi kuliko yale. Nikaanza kuingiwa na shaka. Shaka kweli. Mimi binadamu au ndege?

That's how it was. Now I don't know how many hours I slept. But suddenly I saw that I had feathers. Feathers grew on me, feathers grew on my dad, feathers grew on everyone and everything. Many feathers, really a lot. Suddenly the feathers became wings; and we were launched into the sky. At the beginning it was a pleasure, a real pleasure. But suddenly we got afraid. We could not do anything. The wings made us fly wherever they wanted. Things were flying in the sky – palaces, cars, and we – they crashed into us. I remember I started feeling afraid. And I began plucking out my feathers. But every time I plucked them out, other ones grew. They were blocking my breath. Other ones grew, bigger and stronger than the first ones. And I began to have a doubt. Am I a man or a bird?

This passage illustrates, in a highly lyrical, poetic register, the result of the Demon's influence on Kitaru's identity. The political and economic advancement of Kitaru's social class is represented in his dream as rising into the sky; the initial joy of Kitaru is due to his belief that he would be able to control his wings, in other words his life in the world; but he soon realizes that it is he who is controlled in his flight, namely that he has lost his freedom, and his identity, too, since the more the feathers grow, the more he feels changed, to the point of wondering whether he is a man or a bird.

The Demon's whisper, the *unheimlich* sensation that there is something that has power and control over him, shows that Kitaru has never left the role of *Binadamu* that he took in the Play. In the same way, and unconsciously, something of *Shetani* has remained in Juma. As already mentioned, Juma provokes Kitaru's indignation by talking about the university as a way to achieve socio-economic advancement, thus offending his hope and belief that human beings will overcome this historical conjuncture. Even after listening to his grandmother's memories, and later to the discourses of the two men in the bar, Juma refuses to talk to Kitaru

about this and lets him wonder about the situation of the new Tanzanian ruling class (*A tree's wound is perceived only through its smell, / it does not show itself. What a great shame*, Hussein 1971: 44), thus making their respective isolation even greater. The traces of their characters in the *mchezo* are so deeply impressed in them that, in Act 4, they choose to repeat the Play in order to understand what is happening between them. But this time Kitaru insists on acting as the Demon; Juma refuses totally and eventually the two friends fight (Hussein 1971: 53-55). Even before the Play begins, the fight between the Man and the Demon starts anew: Kitaru-*Binadamu* wants to play the Demon in order to assert his power and so put an end to the *Shetani*'s hegemony, while Juma-*Shetani* refuses to leave his position of predominance. This violent manifestation of the Demon and the Man in the two friends convinces Juma that their friendship can no longer continue: we can understand his decision to put an end to his relationship with Kitaru. Juma's famous line, at the end of the drama, "*Mpanda ngazi na mshuka ngazi hawawezi kushikana mikono*" ("a person who is going upstairs and a person who is going downstairs cannot hold hands" Hussein 1971: 56) does not refer only to the different situation of their social classes: Kitaru's ascent corresponds to the Man's effort to reach the hegemonic position of the Demon, of history, and defeat them by his idealism; Juma, who is completely disillusioned by what the new ruling class is working for, is descending the stairs and accepting the reality of his time. The difference in their opinions makes communication between them insane and dangerous, as Juma says shortly after (Hussein 1971: 56):

> *Wewe unaishi leo. Mimi ninaishi jana. Tutakuwaje marafiki? Na kila leo yako ni kidato cha kesho chako. Mimi, kila leo yangu ni kidato cha jana yangu. Na kila nikienda huko, nikirudi ninarudi na hadithi… hadithi za mashetani.*
>
> You live today. I live yesterday. How will we be friends? And your every today is a step for your tomorrow. For me, my every today is a step for my yesterday. And every time I go there, if I come back I come with a tale… A tale of Demons.

Juma's disillusionment about the possibility of men changing their tomorrow, namely their history, is poison for Kitaru's beliefs, a "*tale of Demons*" that destabilizes not only his ideologies, but also his hopes and the conception he has of his life in society, in other words his identity.

Conclusion

Despite the numerous studies of *Mashetani*, the element of horror in the drama has not been analysed in its own right: rather, allegorical approaches have been proposed to give an interpretation of the most horrific elements of this drama. In this paper, horror in *Mashetani* has been analysed in terms of its own aesthetic processes. One of the most important outcomes is the incompatibility of an analysis of literary horror and an allegorical approach: the horrific element must be seen as a true disturbance of the reader's reality as s/he recognizes it in the literary work, while an allegorical explanation, describing this disturbance as referring to something that is outside the work itself, prevents the reader from feeling a real sensation of horror. These allegorical readings, however, are not rejected by the approach proposed in this paper, but considered as a starting point for further considerations: the figure of Shetani, for example, which Wafula (2003: 172) relates to Swahili culture, has been compared here to the Arab *Šayṭān,* which he derives from, thus revealing his *unheimlich* nature: according to Islamic beliefs and the Qur'an, *Šayṭān* is a horrific being, which, using the instruments presented in the first section, can easily be read as corresponding to Freud's concept of the *Unheimliche*. The *unheimlich*, and generally horrific, dimension of the Demon, as well as of other elements of the drama, has been analysed at a textual, and not only cultural, level: looking, for example, at the two transformations that occur during the Play in the first Act (the first being Juma and Kitaru transformed into the characters they are performing, *Shetani* and *Binadamu*; the second corresponding to *Binadamu*'s rebirth after falling under the Demon's influence), we have shown that both these transformations correspond to a manifestation in the body of something that was already part of the characters, even if hidden in their inner reality and unknown even to themselves: this corresponds on the one hand to Freud's definition of the mechanism of the *Unheimliche*, and on the other to Carroll's definition of the monster as impure since it violates human categories (in this case, among many others, the categories "internal/external"). The fact that the influences of the Demon and the Man continue to exist in Juma's and Kitaru's minds even after the end of the Play demonstrates that the development of the Play must be considered real in the drama's logic, and is not just an allegory to serve the purpose of giving a socio-political background to the rest of the events. Another important point in our analysis is the identification of the monster *Shetani* with history, a force that, in Hussein's conception, as seen in *Kinjeketile*, is imagined as an active, living being, stronger than men but whose action is hidden from them. The contrast between Juma and Kitaru has been explained as being related to their conception of history, rather than to their classes and their families' cultural backgrounds: Kitaru believes

that human beings can direct their own history through idealism and active efforts, while Juma sees history as an independent force that will overcome man's efforts, even if man does not perceive its action. This contrast corresponds to the fight between *Shetani* and *Binadamu* that continues through the whole Play in Juma and Kitaru's personalities. Our analysis of the horror element thus shows that *Mashetani* is not, or not only, a symbolization of a particular historical period, such as colonialism, but a reflection of Hussein's conception of the relation between mankind and history: in this relation, men fight to set themselves free from history's hegemony, but history always overcomes human free will by corrupting it.

References

Amaldi, Daniela. 2008. *Storia della letteratura araba classica*, Zanichelli.

Carroll, Noël. 1990. *The Philosophy of Horror, or Paradoxes of the Heart*, Routledge, Chapman and Hall.

Freud, Sigmund. 1991 [1919]. Il Perturbante. *Saggi sull'arte, la letteratura e il linguaggio.* Bollati Boringhieri. pp. 269–307.

Hussein, Ebrahim. 1969. *Kinjeketile*, Oxford university Press Eastern Africa.

Hussein, Ebrahim. 1971. *Mashetani*, Oxford university Press Eastern Africa.

Hussein, Ebrahim. 1983. Hatua mbalimbali za kubuni na kutunga tamthiliya kufuatana na misingi ya "ki-Aristotle". *Makala za Semina ya Kimataifa ya Waandishi wa Kiswahili III: Fasihi*. Taasisi ya Uchunguzi wa Kiswahili. pp. 194-202.

Pirandello, Luigi. 2013. *Sei Personaggi in cerca d'autore; Enrico IV*, Mondadori.

Ricard, Alain. 2000. *Ebrahim Hussein: Swahili Theatre and Individualism*, Mkuki na Nyota

Publishers.

Todorov, Cvetan. 2011. *La letteratura fantastica*, Garzanti.

Wafula, Richard Makhanu. *Uhakiki wa Tamthilia. Historia na Maendeleo yake*, Jomo Kenyatta

Foundation, 2003.

Web bibliography

Corano in Italiano. Sura CXIV An-Nâs (Gli Uomini) http://www.corano.it/corano_testo/114.htm (last visited 27/09/2017).

The Noble Qur'an. Surah an-Nas [114]. https://quran.com/114 (last visited 27/09/2017).

Swahili Proverbs: methali za kiswahili http://swahiliproverbs.afrst.illinois.edu/kindness.html (last seen 25/09/2017).